

How to convert warm prospects into hot customers

One of the most important parts of a campaign is the call to action. This is, in fact, one element that some leaflet campaigns actually forget to include! Not only does a single leaflet campaign provide just one shot at attempting to persuade customers to buy, but the command to pick up the phone, go to a particular website or send an email is somehow either omitted or presented in such a weak method it is bound to fail.

I used the word 'command', because that is what should be done. It's no good saying "If you would like to know more, please call xxx xxxx", as this 'pretty please' attitude will not induce the customer to pick up the phone. "Call NOW to find out more!" has far more impact, especially if it is combined with an incentive. This statement should also be followed by large, bold contact details on a separate line, not hidden within the closing text.

Unless your offer is so incredibly compelling, it is unlikely that the phone will be ringing off the hook. So the answer is to collect warm leads (people who may not want to buy now, but who may be interested and are sitting undecided on the fence) with a view to conversion at a later date. Marketing is essentially forming a long term relationship with your customers, so you need to be able to gather their details to communicate with them on a gradual basis.

Customers are, by nature, greedy and self-centred, so you should play along with those traits. It's much easier to work with how your customers think than to try and mould them to match you. Therefore provide an incentive they can't refuse, something of value that costs relatively little to you, such as a 'Special Report', 'Early Preview' or 'Ten Top Tips' that they can't fail to resist, in return for their contact details.

Collecting details is made much easier through automation, as you cannot be there 24/7 to receive and send out requests. By setting up an autoresponder on the internet you can collect customer details into a safe and secure database to respond immediately to deliver any 'free gifts' you've promised, and be ready for later communications. Your marketing can continue with on-line campaigns, such as e-zines or e-newsletters, which are relatively inexpensive and much more versatile.

You may still need to continue with the multiple leaflet or postcard campaigns. This is because it can take anything between seven and 21 times to persuade your customers to buy from you. The on-line campaigns should work alongside the paper version for continuous gentle reminders, particularly with different messages or viewpoints, to avoid repetition and therefore indifference. Create a storyboard to encourage a following, with cliff-hangers and new incentives, to entice a positive response. Each 'episode' should continue to have a call to action, especially if it is time-dependent, either to make direct contact or to receive a special offer in return for their details, as you will want to expand your database of prospects.

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